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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 05959 090812Z

15 10
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02

SAM-01 DRC-01 /059 W
---------- 050002
R 090452Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2491

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 5959

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CORRECT E.O. LINE)

FOL TEL RECD FROM SONGKHLA RPTD FOR UR INFO:
"P 090230Z APR 75
FM AMCONSUL SONGKHLA
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

CONFIDENTIAL SONGKHLA 0049

E.O. 11652: GDS DECLAS 12-31-85
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, TH
SUBJ: THOUGHTS ON NAKHON SI THAMMARAT

REF: SONGKHLA 046

1. THAILAND'S CONSERVATIVES, QUIET SINCE OCTOBER 1973, ARE INCREASINGLY RESTLESS UNDER WHAT THEY TERM AN OVERLY PERMISSIVE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. POLITICAL CIRCLES IN BANGKOK SUPPORTED KHUKRIT PRAMOT AS PRIME MINISTER BECAUSE THE WORD WAS THAT KHUKRIT WOULD BE "STRICT" WITH STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS.

2. ONE OF THE FIRST CHALLENGES FOR THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT, AND ONE THAT IT MAY HAVE BROUGHT ON, WAS FROM THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROTESTING THE ARREST OF 17 PERSONS CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH THE ARSON OF THE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE IN JANUARY. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, IT DID NOT KEEP
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 05959 090812Z

THE ISSUE CLEAR CUT. POLICE ARRESTED EIGHT OF THE 17 ON

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

"INCITING TO RIOT" INDICTMENTS, HARD TO PROVE AND POLITICAL
CHARGES IN ANY DEMOC ACY. FURTHERMORE, FOUR OF THE EIGHT
WERE INSTRUCTORS FROM THE LOCAL TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE (TTC).
WHILE THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THOSE FOUR WERE NOT BLAMELESS,
THEIR COLLEAGUES SUPPORTED THE APRIL DEMONSTRATION BECAUSE
THE ARCHAIC EDUCATION SYSTEM MAKES THE TEACHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE ACTIONS OF THEIR STUDENTS. WHILE THIS MAY NOT BE THE
THINKING IN BANGKOK, IT IS GOSPEL IN THE CONSERVATIVE SOUTH.
STUDENTS, HOWEVER, LISTEN TO DIFFERENT DRUMMERS THESE DAYS,
AND THE MAJORITY OF THE TTC TEACHERS WERE ABSOLUTELY HORRIFIED THAT
THE SYSTEM WAS GOING TO LAND ON THEIGHHEADS.

3. WHEN SOCIETY AND ITS VALUES CHANGE THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE
READY TO PUSH THINGS A LITTLE FURTHER. THUS THE BANGKOK ACTIVISTS'
AND POLITICIANS' SELF-INTEREST IN THE NAKHON DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. THE POLICE DEMONSTRATION WHICH FOLLOWED ON THE HEELS OF THE
VICTORIOUS ACTIVISTS WAS PROBABLY A WELL COORDINATED GRUMBLE
FROM SOME OF THE CONSERVATIVES WHO COUNT IN THE SOUTH. IGNORING
THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINES (ALWAYS A GOMD IDEA), LAWLESSNESS DID NOT
GRIP THE SOUTH. MOST OF THE DEMONSTRATING POLICE (WHO WERE
FEW IN NUMBER) WERE FROM POLICE SPECIAL ACTION FORCE (SAF) UNITS,
GENERALLQ NOTORIOUSLY UNDERWORKED ANYWAY. THE HAT YAI DEPUTY
DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF SAID APRIL 7 THAT ONLY A FEW OF HIS MEN
TOOK ANNUAL LEAVE "TO VISIT RELATIVES IN NAKHON". THE POLICE
IN THE SOUTH MAY BE CORRUPT, BUT THEY ARE NOT FOOLHEARTY. SAF,
BORDER PATROL AND PROVINCIAL POLICEMEN WOULD NOT HAVE LEFT THEIR
STATIONS HAD THERE NOT BEEN PROTECTION FROM ABOVE.

5. IN RECENT MONTHS IN THE SOUTH WE HAVE SEEN GENERAL SAN
CHITPATIMA, COMMANDER OF THE FOURTH ARMY, RIG ELECTIONS, STAGE
COUNTER-DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHERWISE ACT WITH CONSIDERABLE
POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION. BANGKOK STUDENT ACTIVISTS INCENSE
GENERAL SAN. LIKE KING HENRY II VIEWING THOMAS A'BECKET, SAN MAY HAV
E
THOUGHT OUTLOUD THAT SOMEONE SHOULD DO SOMETHING TO EMBARASS
THE WEAK KNEED GOVERNMENT IN BANGKOK. WE KNOW THAT DESPITE A
PRIOR APPOINTMENT WITH VISITING JUSMAG FIREMEN APRIL 3, SAN SUDDENLY
WENT TO BANGKOK. THE NEXT DAY THE POLICE WENT ON STRIKE.

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6. THE THAI CONSERVATIVES ARE ACUTELY CONCERNED WITH THE
DRIFT OF EVENTS, PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE THEIR EYES ON THE
SHOALS, NOT THE SHIP OF STATE'S BOW. THE POLICE STRIKE IN
NAKHON SI THAMMARAT WAS TESTIMENT TO THEIR CONCERN AND THEIR
WILLINGNESS TO EXPRESS IT. WE WILL TEST SOME OF THESE OBSERVATIONS
IN A FORTHCOMING TRIP.
REUTHER UNQTE
MASTERS

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